**Dr Tom Rice** **Audio documentary as REF submission, supporting text**

**Govindpuri Sound,** 52 minute (2 part) audio documentary for BBC World Service. First broadcast February 2015. The programme is currently still available on the BBC iplayer here: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02hm1rx. It is not possible to say exactly how many people have heard this programme but it was broadcast twice on the BBC World Service which has a global reach of 75 million people (BBC media centre website) before being put onto the iplayer.

This output is categorised under the 'Digital Artefacts' section of the 'REF Output Collection Formats 2014' document, section Q: 'Digital or visual media'.

This programme was conceived, produced and presented by Dr Tom Rice, Senior Lecturer in Anthropology, Department of Sociology, Philosophy and Anthropology, University of Exeter. Dr Rice's research expertise is in the anthropology of sound and auditory culture (e.g. 2013, 2016).

Slums have a strong visual identity (we are used to seeing TV footage of densely packed, ramshackle homes squeezed onto strips of land in inner cities). This programme, however, adopts an alternative perspective and examines how slums sound. It focuses on a particular illegal settlement known as 'the slums of Govindpuri' in central Delhi, exploring how the sound environment there embodies and reflects local culture.

Rice undertook 2 weeks of location sound recording and interviewing in order to document the soundscape of the Govindpuri slums and to explore how local residents interpret and respond to it. He worked closely with Dr Tripta Chandola, an urban researcher based in Delhi (now a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements). Chandola had previously studied the sound environment of the slum (e.g. 2012, 2013), but the research for this programme was original. The programme was edited together from large quantities of new data, including over 30 interviews and informal conversations and over 10 hours of ambient sound recordings.

The programme illustrates and develops important ideas relevant to the anthropology of auditory culture and the wider interdisciplinary field of Sound Studies. It shows how numerous aspects of the slum are expressed through its sonic dimension. For instance, recordings made while walking through the slum's narrow alleys (only a metre wide in some places and dark due to the upper storeys almost meeting overhead) reflect the architecture and materiality of the space. Conversations with residents convey the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the population and recordings of the daily ritual of collecting water (which is piped into the slum via a concrete channel twice each day) show the scarcity of key resources. Interviews also explore some of the intricacies of life in a place with such a high population density, such as the feeling of close community but the simultaneous lack of privacy and quiet. *Govindpuri Sound* also documents the presence and pervasiveness of tensions around religion inside the slum, with Hindus and Muslims clashing over what each group regards as the other's 'noisy' behaviour.

The programme contains a number or original intellectual exercises. For instance, it shows the fruitfulness of making comparisons between dramatically different soundscapes. The programme demonstrates how the soundscape of a rainforest of Papua New Guinea (Feld 1990, 1996) produced by insects, birds and other animals, has a similar density and spatiality to that created by the interweaving human, mechanical and technological sounds heard in the slum. At the same time, the programme situates the sounds of Govindpuri within the wider context of Delhi and the auditory conventions found there, especially those relating to commerce and consumption (such as hawkers crying their wares), transport (including the constant beeping of car horns, the presence of heavy air traffic and the tightly

controlled soundscape of the city's new metro system), as well as performance and musicality (illustrated by the constant presence of music and the instinct of many interviewees to sing into the microphone).

Importantly, the programme also explores the meanings and implications of quiet and silence in an otherwise bustling global city. There are recordings from a hushed workshop within the slum where women are focused on inserting electric components into tiny circuit-boards. Another scene contrasts the pleasant quietness of a nearby middle-class neighbourhood with the crowded soundscape of the slum. Residents of this neighbourhood express their contempt for what they see as their 'noisy' slum neighbours. They complain of the threat that 'uncivilised' sound poses to local property prices and to the very possibility of the middle-class existence to which they consider themselves entitled. Back inside the slum there is an interview with a woman who has recently undergone a traumatic experience as a surrogate: her muted voice is an expression both of the meek behaviour expected of many women in this part of India and of the many quietly desperate struggles for survival that are constantly unfolding within the settlement.

This research output is a valuable piece of oral history, created at a time of rapid economic and technological change in India. It captures a previously unrecorded aspect of the lives of a precariously-placed community that could at any point be dispersed should the land on which the slum is sited be earmarked for new apartments, a park or a shopping mall. The programme incorporates the voices of people who are rarely heard and whose experiences are seldom documented in any field, be it policy, academia or the media. It also illustrates how an ethnographic context can be described and analysed using sound recording and editing techniques, challenging dominant (visualist) modes of academic knowledge production (Makagon and Neumann 2009). It is an example of a successful effort to produce a piece of what Feld and Brenneis (2004) call 'anthropology *in* sound', where sound is not only the focus of a piece of ethnographic research but also becomes the means of representation.

References:

'BBC's global audience rises to 372m'. BBC Media Centre. Consulted 7th November 2018. https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2017/global-audience-measure.

Chandola, T. 2013. 'Listening in to water routes: Soundscapes as cultural systems'. *International Journal of Cultural Studies 16*(1): 55-69.

Chandola, T. 2012. 'Listening into others: Moralising the soundscapes in Delhi'. *International Development Planning Review* 34(4): 391-408.

Feld, S. 1990. *Sound and Sentiment: birds, weeping, poetics, and song in Kaluli expression*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Feld, Steven. 1996. 'Waterfalls of Song: an acoustemology of place resounding in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea'. In *Senses of Place*, edited by Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso, 91-135. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Feld, S. and D. Brenneis. 2004. 'Doing Anthropology in Sound'. *American Ethnologist* 31(4): 461-74.

Makagon, D. and M. Neumann. 2009. *Recording Culture: Audio Documentary and the Ethnographic Experience*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage.

Rice, T. 2013. *Hearing the hospital: sound, listening, knowledge and experience.* Canon Pyon: Sean Kingston Press.

Rice, T. 2016. 'Sounds Inside: prison, prisoners and acoustical agency'. *Sound Studies: an interdisciplinary journal* 2(1): 1-15.